

Homeschool's Upper Hand over Public School

When it comes to the question about a child's education, there is an important decision which must be made. Should the child be sent to a public school or be homeschooled? This decision must be made with extreme care, because the education of one's child is highly important. Two popular arguments made for the case of public schools are that public schools have licensed teachers, therefore providing better education, and that public schools offer a better environment for the development of socialization skills. To answer these claims, there has been ample research conducted on the differences between homeschooling and public schools done by Dr. Brian D. Ray, president of National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI), and many others. Dr. Ray has done the most extensive research on home education, and his studies show that homeschooling a child offers a great competition to sending him to a public school. In fact, research has shown that homeschooling is actually better than public schools on various levels. A few of these levels include academic achievement, learning environment, self-awareness, and socialization skills.

Dr. Ray noted, "The home-educated typically score 15 to 30 percentile points above public-school students on standardized academic achievement tests" (Ray). This result indicates that, on average, homeschoolers out-perform kids in public schools on the academic level. This outperformance by the "home-educated" happens in every subject (Ray). The reasons for why homeschoolers do so well is that homeschooled children can get more one-on-one mentoring from their parents, enabling the kids to excel in their studies by getting the individual attention that they need at the times they need it (Ray 2-3). Being homeschooled myself, I can testify to the aid that having one-on-one mentoring helped provide. If I was stuck on a certain subject, then my parents were able to help me regardless on the amount of time it took. I did not have to worry about seeing a teacher between

classes or at certain office hours. Also, nearly regardless of where we went as a family or what happened at home (e.g. a light bulb burning out), it was bound to be turned into an educational experience. I was constantly being taught and pushed forward in my studies. This is typical of most homeschool families. Dr. Ray has also discovered that the scores that homeschoolers have achieved are independent of the children's parents' income and level of formal education (Ray). This would imply that regardless of the parents' previous education that the one-on-one mentoring that they are able to provide for their children will still help. Many parents will take it upon themselves to read the curriculum that their kids will be taking so that the parents may help the kids with any sort of questions that the kids might have. In addition to getting more one-on-one mentoring from one's parents for help, there are other benefits that lie with learning at home.

One such benefit is that children with disabilities (e.g. Down Syndrome, ADD, ADHD, etc.) can learn at their own pace and work in an environment that is comfortable for them. These children need more attention, hands on experience, and time to complete their studies than the average student (Burgess 16). Kids with such disabilities tend to not perform as well in a classroom environment (Burgess 16). For example, a kid with ADHD has trouble sitting down for extended periods of time. In a classroom, he will be required to sit down for around fifty minutes as the teacher gives the lesson. If he was to be homeschooled, then he could get up and walk around for five to ten minutes every half-hour or as needed. This procedure might prolong the school day for the child, but walking around will ensure that he is able to keep his mind attentive to what is being taught to further his understanding of the matter at hand. Not only do kids with disabilities have trouble learning in a typical classroom environment, but such kids can also be prone as being targets for being picked on while in a public school setting. This leads to another advantage that homeschooling has over public schools: children homeschooled do not have to worry as much about negative peer treatment or influence.

“[T]here is ample research indicating that homeschooling offers more than just educational benefits” (Romanowski 125). Such benefits include ways in which kids are treated and influenced by their peers. There are many issues that the typical kid has to

struggle with going through a public school system. Issues dealing with depression, rejection, drugs, bullying, popularity, peer acceptance, etc. Homeschooling gives a child the upper-hand of establishing a better, well-rounded perspective of themselves without the thoughts of others affecting them. Research done, including tests on one's "self-concept" and "self-esteem," show that "[t]he home-educated are doing well, typically above average, on measures of social, emotional, and psychological development," (Ray). Ray mentions, "[H]ome-educated girls develop the strengths and the resistance abilities that give them an unusually strong sense of self" by getting "an unusual chance to ask questions such as, 'Who am I?' and 'What do I really want?'" Ray shows that not attending a public school helps to better cultivate an idea of one's self. A child in a homeschool environment can build more confidence in himself resulting in better "social, emotional, and psychological development" which can help in future performance on a job. Personal development and academics are a couple of benefits related to homeschooling. Another benefit deals with a common "misconception" about homeschooling (Romanowski 125-128).

One of the major "misconceptions" about homeschooling is that homeschoolers are "social misfits" (Romanowski 125). This statement is simply not true. I can personally attest to the fact that homeschoolers are indeed social beings. Throughout my life my siblings and I have never had trouble meeting people and engaging with others. One of the activities we did that helped us grow socially was that we participated in our local homeschool group called Allen County Christian Homeschoolers (ACCHS). Associated with ACCHS is an enrichment day program (also called co-operative programs or "Co-ops" for short) where several homeschool families will participate in classes that could not otherwise be done in the individual home. Such classes included band, choir, physical education, and drama. Each class was taught by a parent who was gifted in that area, giving the children access to a great learning experience. There are many such groups across the United States, and these groups help kids interact with other kids their own age. Another major contributor to homeschoolers interacting with others is sports.

Many school districts allow for homeschoolers to play on the school's sports teams, but there are cases in which the districts do not allow homeschoolers to play. In such school

districts one might be able to find a homeschool athletic program or small private school that allows kids to participate in sports if the local school district does not. During my high school years, between sports, the enrichment day program, and other activities in which I would participate (such as church activities), I was interacting with kids my own age every day of the week. My social life was anything but nonexistent and secluded.

In his article “Research Revelations about Homeschooling” Brian Ray attests to my personal statements regarding socialization amongst homeschoolers:

Research time and again finds that homeschool students and their parents are very engaged in their communities, including activities such as sports teams, co-operative classes, church activities, and community service. Further, homeschool children typically interact with a broader range of ages (of children and adults) than do most institutional school children. (2)

Referring to a Master’s thesis written by Thomas Smedley titled “Socialization of Home School Children: A Communication Approach”, Romanowski points out, “Smedley . . . evaluated the communication skills, socialization, and daily living skills of public school and homeschooled students and found that the homeschooled students were significantly better socialized and more mature than their public school counterparts” (Romanowski 126). Ray and Romanowski are pertaining to the fact that not only is the idea of homeschoolers being un-socialized wrong, but that homeschoolers have been tested to have better socialization skills than children found in public schools. In other words, despite the fact of supposedly being secluded from the world, on average, homeschoolers perform better in social interactions than those who attend a public school.

Years of research has been done regarding the differences between homeschooling and public schools. All this research indicates that homeschooling outperforms public schooling on various levels such as academic achievement, self-awareness, socialization, and learning environment. Despite the arguments for public schools that having licensed teachers enable better education and that kids can grow more socially in a public school setting, the facts demonstrate that homeschoolers do just as well, if not better, in these areas

than their public school peers. In the end, homeschooling is the better choice of education for one's child.

Works Cited

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